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ABSTRACT

A project was conducted (1) to obtain an operational definition of vocational guidance as it is practiced in Indiana's secondary schools, (2) to establish a model vocational guidance program as defined by panels of Hoosier practitioners, and (3) to develop an objective, self-administered instrument designed to assess movement toward the model vocational guidance program. In the first of two phases of the project, 174 Indiana secondary school counselors were interviewed regarding the vocational guidance services they provide. In phase 2 practitioners from vocational education and guidance and counselor education were used to identify vocational guidance program functions and means for providing vocational guidance services. Products of the project included the framework for a model vocational guidance program, an outline for organizing comprehensive vocational guidance, planning that includes all service deliverers, and checklists for assessing the existence and quality of vocational guidance services. (LRA)

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FINAL REPORT

AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF VOCATIONAL COUNSELING IN INDIANA/INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT NO. 114-78-III-14

NEW EDUCATIONAL DIRECTIONS, INC.
CRAWFORDSVILLE, INDIANA

JANUARY 31, 1980

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF VOCATIONAL COUNSELING
IN INDIANA/INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

A. Project Products

The following project products are available:
-final report
-*Indiana Secondary Vocational Guidance Planning Handbook*

B. Objectives

1. To obtain an operational definition of vocational guidance as it is practiced in Indiana's secondary schools;

2. To establish a model vocational guidance program as defined by panels of Hoosier practitioners;

3. To develop an objective self-administered instrument designed to assess movement toward the model vocational guidance program.

C. Procedures

O_1 - One hundred seventy-four Indiana secondary school counselors were interviewed regarding the vocational guidance services they provide.

O_2, O_3 - The project used panels of Indiana practitioners from vocational education, guidance and counselor education to identify vocational guidance program functions and means for providing vocational guidance services. These inputs were expanded into the *Indiana Secondary Vocational Guidance Planning Handbook*.

D. As a result of this project, individuals concerned with vocational guidance in Indiana will have available to them

-the framework for a model vocational guidance program,
-an outline for organizing comprehensive vocational guidance planning that includes all service deliverers,
-checklists for assessing the existence and quality of vocational guidance services, and
-a wealth of suggestions for ways to deliver vocational guidance services.

PROJECT POPULATIONS

Groups	Numbers of persons: Impacted by project	Conducting or giving input
students		
secondary	statewide	
postsecondary		
adult		
school personnel		
secondary	statewide	186
postsecondary		1
adult		
other		
counselor educators	statewide	2
employers		
employees		
other: state agency		3
special needs		
disadvantaged		
handicapped		
migrant		
minority	statewide	
limited English proficiency		
other:		

I. OBJECTIVES

The amended objectives for the project were as follows;

1. To obtain an operational definition of vocational guidance as practiced in Indiana's secondary schools;
2. To establish a model vocational guidance program as defined by panels of Hoosier practitioners;
3. To develop an objective self-administered instrument designed to assess movement toward the model vocational guidance program.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Vocational guidance is or should be key to the total vocational education effort. The concern for the "initiation, implementation, and improvement of high quality vocational guidance and counseling programs and activities" is demonstrated at the national level in the 1976 Vocational Education Act

(PL 94-482, Subpart 1, Section 134). In recognition of the need for improvements in this area, the FY1978 State Plan for Vocational Education included the objective, "to provide quality vocational guidance and counseling programs."

As we look carefully at the problem of initiating, improving, and implementing high quality vocational guidance programs, three major tasks emerge. An individual or organization contemplating change should have at least three basic pieces of information available upon which to base decisions. What currently exists, how good it is, and what elements make up a quality vocational guidance program should be known. Without these pieces of information, attempts at change can be ineffective, wasteful, and even counter-productive.

III. PROCEDURE

A two phase process was used to accomplish the project's objectives. In Phase I, secondary school counselors were interviewed to obtain descriptions of current practices in vocational guidance (Objective 1). Phase II focused on the development of the model and self-assessment instruments (Objectives 2 and 3). The two phases were accomplished concurrently, although Phase I feedback was considered during the Phase II developmental process. Specific procedures used in phase are as follows:

A. Phase I.

The status of vocational guidance as practiced in Indiana was determined through interviews with a sample of practicing secondary school counselors. The sampling unit used was the school, not individual counselors. The general pool for the sample was all public secondary schools in the state which involved students in grades 9-12 and included area vocational schools. The sampling procedure used was:

STEP 1: From a pool of all area schools draw one school at random. Place remaining area schools into the general pool.

STEP 2: Randomly draw one school from a pool of all feeder schools for the area school drawn in Step 1. Place all remaining feeder schools into the general pool.

STEP 3: Draw at random 11-18 additional schools from the general pool which included all Indiana public secondary schools.

This process was repeated three times, but once a school was drawn it was removed from the pool to eliminate the possibility of it being drawn a second time. During the first sampling, a total of 20 schools was drawn because NED staff had anticipated that a number of schools would be unwilling to participate or it would be impossible to schedule interviews for a considerable number of schools in the sample. This turned out to be an unnecessary precaution since no school refused to cooperate and difficulties in scheduling interviews eliminated only three schools (less than 5% of those identified in the sample) from participation in the project.

All counselors which could be interviewed within one day at a school were interviewed. In all but twelve schools, or less than 20% of the sample, all counselors in the building participated in the interviews. The sample interviewed totaled 174 and appears to be representative of Indiana's public high schools.

During the study, two different techniques were used by NED interviewers. In the first round of interviews (October 1978), a modified critical incident technique was employed where the interviewer followed the procedures defined in Attachment A. Preliminary inspection of the data from the first cycle of interviews indicated that the incidents reported were of very limited scope. Therefore, interview procedures were modified for cycles 2-4. The revised procedures followed the same format initially but added direct questioning regarding the counselor's involvement with each of the categories listed on the interview tally sheet (Figure 2) which were not mentioned by the counselor during the initial phase of the interview. These categories had been identified as interview guidelines by a panel of vocational education practitioners.

All interviews were conducted between October 1978 and May, 1979. A profile of the interviewed counselors is presented as Figure 1.

Figure 1

Profile of Interviewed Counselors:

154* = Fulltime counselors (96%)
7* = Part time counselors (4%)

25 worked in an area school (15%)

136 worked in high schools (85%)

107 worked in a feeder school with vocational programs (79%)

1 worked in a feeder school without vocational programs (0.6%)

8 worked in schools with vocational programs that were not feeder schools (5%)

*13 of the 174 interviews (7.5%) did not provide interpretable information.

B. Phase II

Throughout the *Handbook's* development, guidance was sought from practitioners of secondary vocational education and guidance and counselor education. The State Board of Vocational and Technical Education and the Department of Public Instruction recommended persons for a "panel pool" from which the project's working groups or panels were drawn. The tasks addressed by these groups were as follows:

1. identify and define vocational guidance program functions,
2. define the scope of each function, and
3. suggest ideas for ways to provide services.

The group members also served as reviewers throughout the writing of the *Handbook*.

The product of the Phase II, the *Indiana Secondary Vocational Guidance Planning Handbook* contains

-a model vocational guidance program,

-a comprehensive planning process that includes all service deliverers,

-checklists for assessing the existence and quality of vocational guidance services, and

-suggestions for ways to deliver vocational guidance services.

V. FINDINGS (Phase I)

The information obtained through the open-ended interviews approach does provide an *a priori* definition of vocational guidance as it is viewed by guidance practitioners in Indiana. Substantial numbers (75+%) of the interviewed counselors, regardless of the setting in which they were working, reported providing students information on vocational programs as a vocational guidance activity. Actions placed into this category were providing students printed material on vocational programs, referring them to microfilm records, using one of the computerized information services, etc. These activities were completed by students without concurrent counseling services.

Seventy-five percent or more of the counselors working in high schools also reported (1) a similar service in providing students with general occupational information and (2) providing students with counseling on the topic of career planning. Counseling appeared to be viewed as a vocational guidance function by more high school counselors than by area school counselors, as between 50-74% of them reported providing counseling along with dissemination of vocational program and occupational information.

Between 50-74% of the area school counselors reported involvement in providing job placement services for students while similar numbers of high school counselors reported coordination of a testing program as vocational guidance functions. Fifty to 74% of both groups reported the scheduling of students into classes as one of their activities.

The model as presented in the *Indiana Secondary Vocational Guidance Planning Handbook* identifies eight functions as the components of a vocational guidance program. These eight functions are elaborated in the *Handbook* and are listed here:

(1) Vocational exploration;

(2) Recruitment, admissions, and scheduling;

(3) Vocational counseling:

(4) Placement;

(5) Program management;

(6) Public relations;

(7) Follow-up; and

(8) Evaluation.

Counselor responses to the open-ended technique do provide an indication of the most prevalent vocational guidance activities for the interviewed counselors. Those activities reported by three quarters or more of these counselors fall under either the vocational exploration or the vocational counseling functions.

The overall results of the interviews are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Frequency of Counselor Reports for Vocational Guidance Activities by Setting by Technique

Key: 3=75-100%
2=50- 74%
1=25- 49%
0=less than 25%

Activity Category	Technique: Open Ended		Direct Questioning	
	Setting: Area School	High School	Area School	High School
1. Public Relations	0	0	3	2
2. Recruiting Activities	1	0	3	2
3. Information Dissemination				
a. Programs	3	3	3	3
b. Programs w/Counseling	1	2	3	3
c. Occupations	1	3	3	3
d. Occupations w/Counseling	1	2	3	3
e. Exploration	1	1	3	3

Figure 2 con't

Activity Category	Technique: Open Ended		Direct Questioning	
	Setting: Area School	High School	Area School	High School
Trouble Shooting	0	0	2	2
5. CE Coordination	1	1	2	2
6. CE Consultation	0	0	2	3
7. Postsecondary Placement	0	1	2	3
8. Job Placement	2	1	3	2
9. Admission-selection	1	1	3	2
10. Scheduling	2	2	3	3
11. Program FU & evaluation	0	0	3	1
12. Counseling				
a. attendance	1	0	3	3
b. distruptive behavior	1	0	3	3
c. grades	1	0	3	3
d. career planning	1	3	3	3
e. job coping skills	1	0	3	3
f. personal	2	1	3	3
13. Curriculum review	0	0	1	1
14. Development of vocational programs	0	0	1	2
15. Coordination of testing program	1	2	2	3

Based on the open-ended interviews, the vocational guidance activities being provided Indiana's youth appear to be very limited. Not surprisingly perhaps, the only vocational guidance offerings which appeared to approach any degree of comprehensiveness were found in area schools. However, where there was a relatively strong guidance program in an area school, the feeder high schools seemed apt to be more involved in providing a variety of vocational guidance services than was true for high schools as a group. This appeared to be especially true if they had been involved with the area school in planning activities. This condition may carry the implication that involving feeder schools in developing and upgrading

vocational guidance programs at area schools can provide a vehicle for upgrading these services in general.

Information obtained during the direct questioning method seems to indicate that the majority of the state's counselors are providing some vocational guidance activities for the most of the eight functions. It must be remembered, however, this mode of questioning yields no indication of the frequency of that involvement. Whereas, the open-ended method required the counselors to report the activities in which they were most recently involved thus providing some indication of frequency. The quality of services being provided was not addressed through either technique.

Some representative comments made by counselors during the course of the interviews were:

> "I know I should find out more about it (vocational education). I don't encourage students to take them simply because I don't know what's offered."
>
> "I wish I had learned more about vocational counseling in my training. We had a semester of career counseling with very little about vocational."
>
> "I'm working on building up files and information about vocations and vocational education programs. I had to start from scratch, so I've got a long way to go."
>
> "The kids are gone from home school so much of the day, we don't get to work with them."
>
> "I admit that I don't do any vocational counseling because I don't know anything about it. I would do more if I knew more."

VI. EVALUATION

Process evaluation was provided by the principal investigator through conferences with project staff. Additional process evaluation was provided by the project monitor through site visits, conferences with project staff and through the review of NED quarterly reports.

Outcome evaluation of the project is dependent to a great extent on the quality and usability of its projects. This will not be possible in any extensive way until the products are disseminated into the field. Some outcome evaluation activities, however, were conducted during the project through reviews of the *Indiana Secondary Vocational Guidance Planning Handbook* by appropriate SBVTE staff and by the project's panel members.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMEDATIONS

The sample of Indiana secondary school counselors appear to fall into three groups relative to the upgrading of vocational guidance services. The first group is individuals who sincerely want to learn more about vocational guidance. They would probably be very responsive to a program of quality inservice training designed to improve and expand the services they are providing to their students. The second group of individuals is probably the largest and would participate in inservice training if it were made "exciting" enough and if they could see how it was going to make their job easier. There is also a large group of counselors who are relatively satisfied with what they are doing and there is no motivation at this point for them to change.

Although project panel members endorse the *Handbook* as a valuable tool for planning (and improving) vocational guidance programs, NED recommends extensive reviews through field testing prior to statewide distribution. Proposals for testing the *Handbook's* materials and planning process in rural, mid-sized city, and urban settings have been accepted by the SBVTE. The field tests will be conducted during the months of April - December, 1980.

The process outlined in the *Handbook* draws upon local needs assessment data for planning decisions. While these data may be available in many areas, it is anticipated they will be lacking in significant numbers of others. Thus, NED recommends the development of needs assessment approaches to fill a possible void in the comprehensive vocational guidance planning process.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR FINAL REPORT ENDING January, 1980
(Date)

Project No. 114-78-III-14

ITEMS	Project Budget FY 19--		Total Expenditures on Project		End of Project Balance	
	Agency	Federal	Agency	State/ Federal	Agency	State/ Federal
A. DIRECT EXPENDITURES						
1. Personnel		$ 19,450.00		$ 20,102.56		$ (652.56)
2. Contractual services		7,800.00		7,777.90		22.10
3. Employee benefits		2,204.00		2,151.94		52.06
4. Travel		5,355.00		5,150.88		204.12
5. Supplies and materials		250.00		238.59		11.41
6. Communications (include phone call, printing)		1,400.00		1,762.32		(362.32)
7. Properties (rentals or purchase of equipment)						
8. Facilities						
9. Product production and dissemination						
10. Project Evaluation						
B. INDIRECT EXPENDITURES						
C. TOTAL EXPENDITURES		$ 36,459.00		$ 37,184.19		$ (725.19) *

Fiscal Agent/Director: Judith M. Thompson

Institution/Agency Name: New Educational Directions, Inc.

*Refund this amount to the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education

TRANSFER OF FUNDS EFFECTIVE AS REQUESTED
UPON AWARD OF CONTRACT #224-79-1[illegible]-4

Line Item	Original Budget	Transferred		Revised Budget
Personnel	$17,950.00	$ 1,500.00	(From Travel)	$19,450.00
Contractual Services	6,800.00	1,000.00	(From Travel and Employee Benefits)	7,800.00
Employee Benefits	2,704.00	(500.00)	(To Contractual Services)	2,204.00
Travel	7,355.00	(2,000.00)	(To Contractual Services and Personnel)	5,355.00
Supplies and Materials	250.00			250.00
Communications	1,400.00			1,400.00
	$36,459.00			$36,459.00

ATTACHMENT A

MODIFIED CRITICAL INCIDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Attachment A

Modified Critical Incident Interview Guide

After obtaining basic background information such as the grade levels served by the counselor and the individual's specific title, the interviewer proceeds through the interview itself.

First Incident: "Describe the most recent vocational guidance function that you have performed. It must be an activity that you personally consider to come under general heading of 'Vocational Guidance' and it must be the most recent activity, even if it does not seem to you to be the most important or representative part of your job."

(The interviewer is to be satisfied that the activity has been described in detail and is to ask questions about anything that was not clear including such matters as the frequency of the activity and the percent of the counselor's time for the activity during a school year.) Then if not already covered and if the function described related to an activity with an individual student, the interviewer is to ask:

"What type of information (whether systematic such as test scores and grades or nonsystematic such as the counselor's previous impressions of the individual) was used in performing this function?"

The interviewer is next to ask:

"Is there any additional information or tool(s) that would have helped you in performing this function?"

(The interviewer is to make every effort to have the counselor be specific in her/his comments.)

Second Incident: "Now that you have gone over your most recent vocational guidance function, please think back and identify the next most recent 'Vocational Guidance' function that you performed."

(From this point the interviewer repeats the same questions concerning information used or needed and asks the 'next-most-recent' question until the counselor's repertory is exhausted or the forty-five minute time limit is reached.)